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ABSTRACT

This handbook contains guidelines and recommendations for secondary and postsecondary faculty and administrators in developing articulation agreements. It defines articulation, lists student and educational institution benefits, and describes the following types: accelerated placement; business, professional, or private organization certification; credit by examination; and formal articulation agreements. These steps in a formal articulation agreement process are discussed: discussion, curriculum alignment, refinement of proposed programs, approval process, and agreement review provision. A discussion of implementing articulation lists information to be provided to and items to be processed by the student. Other sections cover the agreement review process, cancellation, expiration, and distribution of articulation materials. Issues to address about articulation are outlined: geography, consumer information, common language or criteria for outcomes, academic freedom, revenue perception, posting methods, timelines, learner centered, regular curriculum review and update, turfism, open dialog channels, commitment to long-term goals, leadership and support, articulated credit, curriculum groups, realistic deadlines, and student follow-up. Common definitions are followed by information on administrative aspects of articulation: administrators' commitment, upper-level enrollment increases, process familiarization, direct faculty involvement, articulation responsibilities, and competency validation. (YLB)

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Michigan Articulation Handbook

Michigan Department of Education
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How to use the MICHIGAN ARTICULATION HANDBOOK

This publication contains guidelines and recommendations for secondary and postsecondary faculty and administrators as they work to develop articulation agreements.

The handbook contains common definitions, a general process to follow and issues to consider. The information contained within the handbook was put together to help facilitate communication and avoid pitfalls that can occur when working toward articulation.

There are useful explanations in this handbook that can also be used to develop promotional brochures for students and/or parents to inform them about articulated programs.

This handbook is the result of the work contributed by the members of the Tech Prep Articulation Committee to whom we offer our deepest gratitude. The template used was a document contributed by Ed Stanton of Macomb Community College which provided an excellent place to begin in developing the guidelines and ideas contained herein.

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MICHIGAN
ARTICULATION HANDBOOK

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MICHIGAN
ARTICULATION HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Michigan secondary and postsecondary institutions (community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities) seek to provide educational and training structures that are responsive to the transition of students to the college level. Articulation is the process by which a student earns college credit or a waiver of prerequisite requirements. The heart of the issue is that articulation should come after curricular alignment so that with the appropriate preparation, the student's transition from secondary to postsecondary will be successful.

Colleges are committed to providing a variety of methods for granting credit for competencies, skills and knowledge attained outside the college classroom. Articulation agreements between colleges and other educational agencies allow students who successfully complete certain courses or competencies to apply for college credit. This advanced standing can be used in a specified college program that contains the articulated courses according to the agreements established at each institution. Please be aware that articulation agreements signed between institutions are very individual to the parties involved. This handbook provides general guidelines and definitions.

WHAT IS ARTICULATION?

Articulation is a term used to describe the various methods by which a student can 1) receive credit for competencies mastered outside the college classroom; or 2) begin college study in courses higher than entry level. The different types of articulation include advanced placement, business, professional, and/or private organization certification, credit by examination and formal articulation agreements.

BENEFITS OF ARTICULATION

Student Benefits

- ✓ save money on tuition, fees and books
- ✓ accelerate progress
- ✓ reduce duplication of instruction
- ✓ create the opportunity for expanded program content
- ✓ improve job readiness skills
- ✓ improve job placement potential
- ✓ earn college credit
- ✓ motivation to continue with schooling

Educational Institution Benefits

- ✓ promote curricular alignment, relevance and integration
- ✓ facilitate communication between and among educational institutions
- ✓ facilitate communication between and among faculty and administrators
- ✓ reduce duplication of instruction
- ✓ expand program content
- ✓ enhance public relations
- ✓ increase enrollment in articulated courses at the high school
- ✓ increase enrollment in articulated courses at the college
- ✓ assist with recruitment at all levels of education
- ✓ promote a more unified educational system

TYPES OF ARTICULATION

Accelerated Placement

Accelerated placement programs allow the placement of students in more advanced courses by equating test results, previous grades, articulated credit, dual-enrollment credits earned while in high school and/or interviews by the appropriate academic

department with the required classroom preparation (prerequisites) for a college course. This advanced standing is not necessarily indicated on the student's transcript and credit might not be awarded for the courses that are waived. Students are simply allowed to bypass introductory/first semester or first year courses and proceed directly to more advanced/second semester or first year courses.

Business, Professional and/or Private Organization Certification

Business, professional and private organizations may have special certifications or credentialing practices. In some cases, these certificates/credentials may earn the holder a certain amount of articulated credit in a particular program at the post-secondary level. For example: successfully completing the Machinist Training Institute Program or any high school program with Level One competencies from the National Institute of Metalworking may allow an individual to obtain 13 college credit hours at some schools.

Credit by Examination

Students can earn college credit for completed competencies through two different types of examinations. Using the first method, credit can be earned by students who wish to omit courses for which they already have the necessary competencies/skills by successfully completing a "departmental" exam developed by the college. This allows a student to complete college work in a shorter period of time. Credit earned through this process is posted on the student's transcript. Credit by examination may also be nationally established, such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), American College Testing Proficiency Exam Program (ACT/PEP) and Advanced Placement (AP).

Formal Articulation Agreements

The most common type of articulation is the competency-based course articulation. In this type of articulation, competencies and performance levels mastered in a high school course(s) are compared with those contained in a postsecondary course(s). If the competencies and performance levels match, the courses can be articulated. If the competencies and performance levels do not match, the high school may choose to revise its curriculum to include those missing competencies/performance standards. Articulated credit may be granted to students who obtain the agreed upon performance level. Individual colleges already have established processes for accepting this type of credit through their admissions, registrar or counseling offices.

Formal Articulation Agreement Process

Prior to initiating articulation agreements, it is recommended that an agreement in philosophy or a set of principles be established at the institution.

Initiate Discussion

Articulation may be initiated from any of several sources: school district faculty and/or administrators, postsecondary faculty and/or administrators, students and business people. Initial discussions about articulation should involve the appropriate individuals responsible for consideration of the proposal.

Align the Curriculum

- ✓ exchange detailed course content documentation
- ✓ compare course content and select required competencies
- ✓ evaluate content and achievement levels
- ✓ agree on modifications in the curriculum as needed
- ✓ visit a typical lab or classroom in both systems as needed
- ✓ put the competency based articulation into writing

Refine the Proposed Programs

Appoint a coordinator to communicate procedures and distribute proposed agreements to all appropriate individuals and solicit their input in the process. Then, evaluate the input, revise and refine the proposed programs before securing final approval.

Approval Process

The parties should establish a time and date for the signing of the agreement. The recommendation for articulation should be shared with appropriate personnel at both levels. It is imperative that all concerned individuals be involved in this information sharing/recommending phase.

Agreement Review Provision

All articulation agreements should contain provisions for periodic review. The review process should follow the same steps as the

initial articulation process, but should be less intensive and quicker to complete. Student tracking and completing a follow-up study on the students that have waived the initial courses or requirements will provide valuable data to use in the review.

Implementing Articulation

One of the most important steps in the articulation process is to assign someone at the college and the high school to act as an information clearinghouse.

Information to be Provided to Students

These items are to be discussed with high school students by the high school counselor and/or college recruiters and faculty:

- ✓ Courses for which credit is granted are most beneficial if they are a part of the student's career plan.
- ✓ The student must meet all postsecondary admission requirements.
- ✓ The student must meet any required grade/average and any special conditions required in the articulation agreement.
- ✓ Colleges may require that the student be enrolled at the college at the time the articulation credit is posted to his/her college transcript.
- ✓ Colleges may require a petition or application initiated by the student within a certain time frame.

Items to be processed by the student

- ✓ The student requests that the high school transcript and any other articulation documents be forwarded. This should be done early to avoid the rush at registration time.
- ✓ The student contacts a counselor/advisor or program administrator at the college to fill out any necessary paperwork required at the college.

Marketing of programs

A plan should be developed so that students, parents and counselors are made aware of the opportunities that are in place, what the benefits are and the procedures to be followed. In this way, students will be able to take full advantage of the articulation work that has been done.

Agreement Review Process

Annual meetings are recommended to schedule review of existing articulation agreements and discuss plans to initiate new articulation agreements. In addition, if there have been any changes within the curriculum or the faculty at either institution, the review process should also be completed. It must be determined by the college who oversees the process and who conducts the reviews/negotiations.
Representatives from participating educational institutions should be invited to this meeting. These steps are suggested:

- ✓ exchange detailed course content documentation
- ✓ compare course content and course competencies
- ✓ evaluate content and achievement levels
- ✓ agree on modifications in the curriculum as needed
- ✓ visit a typical lab or classroom in both systems as needed
- ✓ put the competency based articulation into writing

Either Party May Cancel

An articulation agreement should contain a cancellation provision. Some type of official notification must be completed, signed, and distributed. The cancellation of articulation during a school year should not affect students who are enrolled in articulated courses for that school year.

Expiration

Expiration dates (if any are agreed upon) should be noted on the articulation agreement. It is strongly suggested that all articulation agreements be reviewed at least every two years so that there would be no expiration but rather a renewal of articulation.

DISTRIBUTION OF ARTICULATION MATERIALS

The agreements and associated promotional materials must be shared with the appropriate personnel. It should be determined which offices are responsible for the distribution of all articulation agreements. Coordination of the agreements should be part of an integrated systemic plan.

Individuals who may receive articulation materials:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Tech Prep coordinators
- ✓ Tech center/trade academy principals
- ✓ High school contact person (administrator)
- ✓ High school faculty
- ✓ High school counselors
- ✓ High school occupational/technical education department chairpersons and faculty
- ✓ School-To-Registered Apprenticeship coordinators
- ✓ Postsecondary registrar
- ✓ Postsecondary president's council
- ✓ Postsecondary academic vice president
- ✓ Postsecondary department chairs
- ✓ Postsecondary instructional and student service administrators
- ✓ Postsecondary counseling office
- ✓ Postsecondary admissions offices
- ✓ Appropriate postsecondary faculty

High school counselors and articulated program instructors have key roles in the process of informing students and parents about the possibility of receiving credit from the college through articulation. Postsecondary high school admission representatives serve as the "linking pin" between educational institutions. They are essential in communicating to students the process at the college.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED ABOUT ARTICULATION

Geography
There are areas of the state in which the distance of the high schools makes the process of articulation more difficult. In rural areas the alignment of the curriculum becomes a more cumbersome activity because of the added burden of traveling for meetings and curriculum work. In such cases, the use of e-mail, list serves and teleconferencing will be needed to facilitate continued communication.

Consumer Information
It is very important to make sure that students and parents understand that the acceptance of articulated credit varies from institution to institution.

Common Language/Criteria for Outcomes
It should be made clear to those faculty who are beginning an articulation project that some programs will be more difficult to articulate than others. Some programs can be articulated with relative ease when there are consistent standards of measure, such as a specialized test for auto mechanics. Other programs must establish outcomes with each individual college with which they choose to articulate.

Academic Freedom
The college faculty is instrumental in the development of curriculum and the identification of outcomes. This means that the involvement of faculty is critical to the success of articulation.

Revenue Perception
Articulation is a benefit for students. Revenue is an important issue that may affect the willingness of the administration and faculty to enter into agreements. In some institutions, the cost category for articulation is viewed as a revenue loser because students take fewer credits at the college. There may, however, be an increase in enrollments because of the ease of articulating to the college.

Posting Methods

A process needs to be established for high schools, community colleges and four-year institutions to record this information with consistency and common understanding. Currently, there is no uniformity between institutions as to how they post articulated credits onto a student transcript. It is very difficult to know what type of credit was given and there is no consistent value to the credits because each college accepts different achievements and records them in different ways.

Time Lines

Some institutions have a definite expiration date as to when students can use articulated credit. When several years pass, students may need to re-demonstrate mastery by competency tests to be certain that they have the skill levels needed to earn their associate or bachelor's degree. This information must be stated in writing up front to potential partners in the articulation agreement as well as to future students.

Learner Centered

All students will welcome a smooth transition to advancing their education. Every attempt must be made by potential partnership institutions to streamline the process.

Regular Curriculum Review and Update

Assigning responsibility to a specific person or office and putting the process in writing will help to continue a smooth transition for students when staff changes. The best of intentions can sometimes end up stalled because of a lack of communication between articulation parties. Staff changes also make it difficult to maintain the constant flow of information between high schools and colleges.

Turfism

It should be remembered that students would benefit most when the barriers to educational opportunities are eliminated.

Open Dialog Channels

Open communication, trust, cooperation, and experience in following a well-established articulation procedure cooperatively developed by both levels can help reduce apprehension and misunderstandings.

Long-term Goals Need Commitment
Articulation is a long-term strategic process. Overly ambitious plans and expectations are difficult to sustain over a long period of time, so attempts at articulation have to match the school's long-term ability and commitment to maintain these activities.

Leadership and Support Are Essential
It is essential that concepts, expectations, and benefits are clearly understood. Efforts toward articulation should not be forced. Recognition, leadership and support are essential.

Articulated Credit Will Vary
Articulation will vary from program to program and should be refined over a period of time, based on experience and success. Any design for a new system of articulation should be merged with as much of the existing structure within the institution as possible.

Curriculum Groups
A natural tendency is to want to work out the details of articulation in a large group so that all parties can have equal input and save time. Large group meetings can sometimes be helpful if group leadership is available. Too often, though, large groups cannot reach agreement on the details required for articulation efforts. Most details for articulation can best be worked out in small groups or on a one-to-one basis by faculty at both levels. Lack of communication at any level can create problems, and awareness of this fact must be continually kept in mind.

Realistic Deadlines
Already established daily activities tend to receive top priority; therefore, realistic deadlines should be established in an effort to encourage progress. Articulating program content can become bogged down in the process of setting up meetings, matching competencies, and completing paperwork.

Follow-up of Students
A process should be established to assess the success of the articulated programs. All articulated programs need continuous follow-up, assessment and evaluation of student participation.

DEFINITIONS

Credit for Experiential Learning or Work Experience
This method of earning college credit for work experience or experiential learning is currently being explored at many colleges.

Dual Enrollment Credit
Dual enrollment credit articulation is a process by which high school students complete a college course. The competencies (course content, learner outcomes, and evaluation/performance measures) both in the high school and college level courses are determined to be equal prior to the offering of the course. A single course encompassing agreed upon competencies may be taught at the high school location or at the postsecondary location, and students will receive both high school credit and college credit upon satisfactory completion of the course. The rules governing dual credit have been developed by the Michigan State Board of Education.

Program Articulation
Articulated Programs are those in which four years of high school courses are designed to flow to college programs. These programs (2 + 2, 4 + 2, Tech Prep and Career Prep), often designed to meet the demands of advanced technology, usually are developed and approved by the college and the school districts. These programs include a strong mathematics, science, communication, and technical base in the ninth through twelfth grades that in turn are designed to feed into another two years in the technical and high-tech programs at the college. They may also include two additional years at a four-year university (4 + 2 + 2) added to the educational plan.

Tech Prep Associate Degree Programs
Tech Prep articulated programs could include competency-based and/or program-based articulation. Tech Prep programs are developed to provide students with more academic and technical skills to meet the needs of the business sector. The program must have a common core of required courses in mathematics, science, communications and technologies that lead to an associate degree or certificate in a specific career field.

Transfer Credit to Universities
Transfer of credit to universities from Michigan community colleges is available to students in almost all program areas. The initiating and receiving institutions predetermine which courses will transfer as required and/or elective courses.

Bachelor Degree Partnership Programs
These programs (sometimes called a University Center) are available at some Michigan community colleges and allow students to complete the necessary courses to earn a bachelor's degree or master's degree from senior universities across the state through the community college campuses. It is a cooperative effort that combines the facilities of the community college and the curriculum of many of Michigan's finest senior colleges and universities.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF ARTICULATION

Commitment from Administrators
Leadership and commitment to articulation must be present at each educational level and filter through to the classroom instructors. The instructors must be assured that the administration completely supports articulation and will continue to support it. Administrative support is critical because articulation is a long-term investment. There must be a financial commitment to articulation consistent with the size of the commitment. In reality, the total investment is small when compared to the potential long-term gains.

Upper-Level Enrollment Increases
The initial influx of students is likely to be small, but it will gradually increase over time. The credits earned by students through articulation are for first-and/or second-semester courses. Therefore, new students attracted through articulation will add to the upper-level class size where additional enrollment is normally smaller.

Process Familiarization
For the initial planning stages of articulation, someone at an administrative level at the postsecondary institution must be charged with the overall responsibility for developing and reviewing the articulation system. Time must be allowed for all participants involved in the process to become familiar with the concept, and the

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system must be tailored to the resources and structures of the participating institutions.

Direct Faculty Involvement

Once the planning stage is completed, faculty members have to become directly involved. Articulating programs within the postsecondary institution should be planned over a period of time depending on the number of departments and the number of high school districts to be involved. It is recommended that at least one year be allowed for initial articulation, and review/revision of articulation be done every semester on a rotating basis so that each program articulation agreement will be reviewed at least every two years.

Articulation Responsibilities

Articulation responsibilities flow between many offices on the campus. The specific administrator responsible for the implementation of the agreements needs to be identified. Review of curriculum and competencies are the most important and time-consuming activities in the entire process; therefore, appropriate time for a representative to manage articulation is highly recommended. The amount of time allotted depends on the number of schools, courses, and districts involved. Once articulation agreements are in place, it is reasonable to expect a curriculum team to routinely review, update, and maintain the articulation documents.

Competency Validation

Competency-based curriculum readily lends itself to articulation. The competencies required for entry-level employment are identified through a formal process (such as DACUM-Develop A CurriculuM) and are subsequently validated by business and industry representatives. These competencies must be sequenced in a logical order and have predetermined performance measures for assessing skill acquisition. Business and industry provide information to be used in measuring student success. These are usually laid out in a chart or checklist format. Instructional materials should be well planned and laid out in a systematic format. Well-organized materials assist in the task of comparing competencies between high school and postsecondary institutions. If the high school is also using competency-based formats, the competency comparison can be readily achieved.

Many occupational programs have been carefully developed and improved over a period of time under the direction of an advisory committee and local business. These programs operate with course outlines or syllabi that contain organized competencies/objectives and performance measures as suggested by business practitioners. The question becomes, should these courses/programs which are not in competency-based format be rewritten into one of the competency-based formats as a prerequisite for articulation? The answer must come from within the cooperating schools. Articulation does not require that courses/programs be organized/presented in competency-based format. However, using this type of format makes it easier to review the curriculum and share information regarding industry-based entry-level skills that are included. Thus, the articulation process will progress more rapidly and be simpler to understand.

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